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## Five Stamford firms cited for success in helping commuters carpool

By Mark Ginocchio,  
*Special Correspondent*

**STAMFORD** -- Five Stamford companies will be recognized today by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for providing benefits to commuters who get out of their cars and opt for mass transit or van pools.

The EPA's first annual New England Best Workplaces for Commuters list includes Stamford-based Hyperion Solutions, MetroPool, Pitney Bowes, Purdue Pharma and Time Warner Cable, among 83 others throughout New England recognized as having "superior commuter benefits to employees" and working to reduce traffic and air pollution.

Benefits offered by the companies range from transit-checks and van-pool subsidies to on-site amenities such as day care or dry cleaning.

"Our goal is to have more and more employers see this as a growing trend," said Patty Klavon, EPA's New England commuting program coordinator. "It just makes good business sense."

When Purdue Pharma moved from Norwalk to Stamford more than three years ago, executives realized that the commuter benefits plan was essential in preventing any employees from leaving the company.

"We were committed to inconveniencing our employees as little as possible," said Merle Spiegel, director of corporate communications for Purdue Pharma. The company now has more than 1,000 employees of its total Stamford workforce of 1,100 signed up for the benefits.

Purdue Pharma offers \$100 in transit checks each month to employees who commute by train and reimburses them \$50 for parking fees. They also lease 50 spots at the Fairfield train station for employees on the waiting list for parking.

Purdue offers one of the most generous commuter subsidy packages and like other companies it also provides commuter shuttles to get their employees to the workplace and back to the station.

"When you look at the faces of the folks coming out of the parking garage versus those coming off the shuttle, you can see those on the shuttle are more ready to work," said Edward Houghton, director of workforce effectiveness for Pitney Bowes.

Houghton said nearly 400 employees a day ride the shuttles and also take advantage of the

company's visitor centers that provide Internet access, fax machines, printers and private phone booths.

Most of the shuttle service is provided by MetroPool, a company founded in 1980 as a result of a gas crisis. By working with other businesses, MetroPool sets up programs that group commuters into van pools.

Although MetroPool has only 12 employees, spokeswoman Peggy Hetherington said the company offers similar benefits as others on the EPA's list, including commuter allowances, parking subsidies and transit passes.

In those inevitable cases in which commuters can't take the train or shuttle, Hyperion Solutions helps to arrange car pools with employees.

"Our offices are off Exit 34 on the Merritt Parkway," said Nancy Chaikin, senior director of employee communications for Hyperion. "It's bumper to bumper out there at rush hour. We want to get as many cars off the road as possible."

Hyperion employees can check an electronic bulletin board online to find someone to drive with. More than 80 people participate and receive two \$10 checks a month for gas costs if they carpool at least twice a week.

At Time Warner Cable in Shippan, employees who work late and miss a train are guaranteed a lift with their "Guaranteed Ride Home Program." Spokesman Keith Coccozza said Time Warner will send for a cab with a company credit card in case someone pulls an all-nighter.

Some companies have made it easy for employees to do household chores while at the office. Purdue Pharma offers meals to go and on-site dry cleaning and Pitney Bowes provides workers with a fitness center and a medical clinic where they can receive primary care and screenings.

But even with these successes, the EPA's work has just begun.

"Best Employer" lists will spring up in other regions across the country over the next few months, including one surveying the New York Metro area in May. The hope is that other companies that have not converted to a commuter-friendly environment will jump on the bandwagon.

"More employers need to become aware of those that offer these kinds of subsidies," Klavon said. "Those who don't are behind the trends."

<http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/local/scn-sa-stamcommuter2oct30,0,6844835.story?coll=stam-news-local-headlines>

### **Commuting winners**

Best workplaces for commuters in Connecticut:

- Bayer Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals, West Haven
- Hospital of Saint Raphael, New Haven
- Hyperion Solutions, Stamford
- MetroPool, Stamford
- PanAmSat Corporation, Wilton
- People's Bank, Bridgeport
- Pitney Bowes, Stamford
- Preferred Tool & Die, Shelton
- Proton Energy Systems, Wallingford
- Purdue Pharma, Stamford
- Rideworks of Greater New Haven, New Haven
- The Rideshare Co., Windsor
- Time Warner Cable, Stamford
- Yale University, New Haven